Teacher's Key

The History of Emoji: From Japanese Phones to the World (Level B1)

Vocabulary Matching

1 versions = **N**
2 official = **A**
3 sideways = **H**
4 related = **L**
5 released = **G**
6 grid = **M**
7 complicated = **I**
8 depends = **E**
9 proposal = **D**
10 devices = **O**
11 survey = **J**
12 neutral = **K**
13 contract = **B**
14 confirm = **C**
15 signature = **F**

Fill in the Blank

1 versions
2 official
3 sideways
4 related
5 released
6 grid
7 complicated
8 depends
9 proposal
10 devices
11 survey
12 neutral
13 confirm
14 signature

True or False

1 **True.** The reading gives the date September 16, 2026.

2 **False.** He suggested it on an online message board in 1982.

3 **False.** It comes from Japanese: e means picture and moji means character.

4 **True.** The museum added it to its collection in 2016.

5 **False.** The reading describes earlier sets from 1997 and 1988.

6 **True.** The reading says the J-Phone set included it.

7 **True.** At first, each phone company had its own set.

8 **False.** It chose the face with tears of joy emoji in 2015.

9 **False.** They disagreed in 25 percent of cases.

10 **True.** In December 2024, two of three appeal judges agreed.

Language Focus: Past Simple with Time Expressions

Example answer: **In 2014**, I **got** my first smartphone. **The next year**, I **sent** my first emoji to my sister. **Last year**, I **stopped** using the crying-laughing face.

Comprehension Questions: Model Answers

1 It approved nine new emoji, including a cracking face, a pickle, and a lighthouse. With skin tone versions, the official list grew to 3,972.

2 He suggested :-) as a way to mark jokes on an online message board at Carnegie Mellon University, because readers could not always tell when a post was a joke.

3 It comes from Japanese: e means picture and moji means character. It is not related to the word emotion, although the words look alike.

4 It released 176 small pictures for its i-mode mobile internet service. Shigetaka Kurita, a member of the i-mode team, designed them on a 12 by 12 pixel grid.

5 Kurita's set was often called the first, but a J-Phone phone had 90 emoji in 1997, and Kurita agreed it came first on phones. A Sharp organizer from 1988 had emoji-like symbols. The answer depends on what you count as an emoji.

6 Before Unicode, each Japanese phone company had its own set, so emoji did not work well between companies. Unicode gives every character a number, so different devices show the same symbol.

7 In 2011, Apple put an emoji keyboard on iPhones around the world. In 2015, Oxford Dictionaries chose the face with tears of joy emoji as its Word of the Year, using SwiftKey data.

8 People often understood the same emoji differently. When they looked at exactly the same picture, they disagreed about whether it was positive, neutral, or negative in 25 percent of cases, and the disagreement grew across companies.

9 A farmer replied with a thumbs-up emoji to a photo of a flax contract. The crop failed and no flax was delivered, and a judge decided the emoji meant yes, so the farm had to pay about 82,000 Canadian dollars. Two of three appeal judges agreed; the third did not accept that one small picture could count as a signature.

10 False. At first, emoji worked only inside Japan. They spread outside Japan after Unicode added them in 2010 and Apple added a keyboard worldwide the next year.

11 No. The writer says the history is more complicated and that the answer depends on what you count as an emoji.

12 Best answer: to show that emoji can have serious effects. The case shows that the meaning of one emoji can cost real money. Accept a reasoned answer; the writer does not give legal advice.

Notes on the Evidence

- No source draft was supplied; the reading was written from the topic and checked by search. First emoji: the common claim that Shigetaka Kurita and NTT Docomo made the first emoji (1999, 176 characters, 12 by 12 pixels; MoMA acquired the set in 2016) is disputed. Emojipedia (2019) reported the J-Phone SkyWalker DP-211SW set of 90 emoji (November 1997; J-Phone later became Vodafone Japan, then SoftBank Mobile), and Kurita posted on social media in January 2019 that the J-Phone phone came first. In 2024, Emojipedia described emoji-like sets found by Matt Sephton on the Sharp PA-8500 (October 1988). Docomo's 1995 pager heart is often cited as an influence.
- Unicode: the Unicode Technical Standard #51 says a Google proposal was approved in May 2007 and that Apple engineers co-authored the 2009 proposal. A set of 722 carrier emoji was defined; 114 were already in Unicode 5.2 and the remaining 608 were added in Unicode 6.0 (October 2010). Oxford Languages says the word was rare outside Japanese contexts until Apple's iOS 5 (2011). Oxford's 2015 Word of the Year relied on SwiftKey's usage data (20 percent of emoji used in the UK and 17 percent in the US), which is company data.
- Unicode 18.0 was released on September 16, 2026 (Unicode blog, Emojipedia); one site gives September 1. The 3,972 total is Emojipedia's count of recommended emoji including skin tone and gender variations; other counting methods give different totals, and the number will grow with later releases.
- Survey: Miller, Thebault-Spieker, Chang, Johnson, Terveen, and Hecht, ICWSM 2016 (GroupLens, University of Minnesota), an online survey; the 25 percent figure is from the paper's abstract. A 2017 follow-up by the same group studied emoji with surrounding text. Emoticon: Carnegie Mellon dates Scott Fahlman's post to September 19, 1982; earlier similar marks exist.
- Court case: South West Terminal Ltd. v. Achter Land and Cattle Ltd., 2023 SKKB 116 (damages of about 82,200 Canadian dollars). Reports differ on the contract size (86 or 87 tonnes) and value (CBC gives 58,000 dollars for the contract). The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal upheld the decision 2 to 1 in December 2024 (CBC, Western Producer). The farmer's explanation and the crop failure are from court reports.